RESEARCH PLAN PROPOSAL

(Tentative Title)

Representation of the Self and the Other in the Works of George Orwell

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Research Problem:

Postcolonial studies are broadly concerned with the experiences of exclusion, denigration and resistance under the colonial rule. A central feature of postcolonial theory is an examination of the impact of the European conquest, colonization and domination of non-European lands, peoples and cultures. One of the important aspects of the Postcolonial studies has been the concepts of the Self and the Other, both concerned with identity. The so called rational, superior, colonial **Self** is contrasted with the barbarism and irrationality of the **Other**, but many writers have argued for a need to deconstruct the binary.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon suggests that colonialism has created a sense of division and alienation in the self-identity of the colonized people. Under colonialism the history, culture, language, customs and beliefs of the colonizers are considered superior to those of the local indigenous culture of the colonized. This creates a strong sense of inferiority in the colonized subject and leads to an adoption of the language, culture and customs of the colonizers by the colonized, as a way of compensating, for these feelings of inferiority in their self-identity. Fanon's work on the role of representation in the construction of self-identity clearly shows the influence of the theories of Lacan, in particular his concept of the mirror-stage of identity formation.

A similar analysis is done by Edward Said in his work *Orientalism*, in which he argues that the Orient has been represented as the binary opposite of the West. Said discusses how these orientalist representations function to reimpose colonial domination through suggesting that western values, beliefs and forms of culture are imposed to counter the inherently negative 'traits' of these so called inferior cultures.

Gayatri Spivak points out the 'differences' both pronounced and subtle which separate and divide those called natives or the colonized. She emphasizes on the different forms of othering of subject formation even within the category of the oppressed.

Homi Bhabha in *The Other Question* and *Remembering Fanon* also explains that the colonizer is locked into the fractious position of constantly disavowing and rejecting (in the form of negative stereotypes) the presence of the other , yet at the same time acknowledging it.

Although Karl Marx never developed a theory of colonialism, his analysis of capitalism emphasized its inherent tendency to expand in search of new markets. Marx's analysis of colonialism as a progressive force bringing modernization to a backward feudal society sounds like a transparent rationalization for foreign domination. Even though Marx believed that British rule was motivated by greed and exercised through cruelty, he felt it was still unwittingly the agent of progress. Thus, Marx's discussion of The British rule in India has three dimensions: an account of the progressive character of foreign rule, a critique of the human suffering involved, and a concluding argument that British rule must be temporary if the progressive potential it unleashed is to be realized.

Orwell's works have themes woven around the fabric of postcolonialism. In this thesis I will analyze selected works of George Orwell which thematise the binaries: Self and the Other. My thesis will include his works like *Burmese Days,* "Shooting An Elephant" and "Marrakech". Furthermore, I will analyze Orwell's works like *1984* and *Animal Farm* to find similarities between the Colonial rule and Totalitarian rule and how language was used as a tool to oppress the colonized and those ruled by the totalitarian government.

The chief questions I will investigate are: How are Self and the Other represented in the works of George Orwell? What are the complexities of such a representation in Orwell's works? How does Orwell look at the Imperialist? How is he looking at the natives or subjects? How do the natives look at him? What is Orwell's stance in such a situation?

Colonialism also has a contrasting and equally damaging effect on the minds and psyche of both the colonized and the colonizers. The responses of the native subjects to this colonial oppression are not oppositional but subtle, sly, oblique and underhand. How are the colonizers never able to relax and enjoy the colonized nation and the good things it has to offer because of this feeling of being

unwelcome? How by becoming a ruler does he cease to be a friend? How is he never able to enter the spirit of the country and is always an alien in that foreign land? Because when the natives even 'salaam' him it is not for him but for the empire.

In my research work I will analyze selected novels and essays for their representation of the Self and the Other. How do the Self and the Other translate into 'us' and 'them'? I will also examine the questions about the politics of representation, race, recognition and identity. A key feature of my thesis is the analysis of the role played by representation in installing and questioning the notions of European superiority.

Definition of Terms:

Postcolonialism: A cultural, intellectual, political, and literary movement of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries characterized by the representation and analysis of the historical experiences and subjectivities of the victims, individuals and nations, of colonial power. Postcolonialism is marked by its resistance to colonialism and by the attempt to understand the historical and other conditions of its emergence as well as its lasting consequences.

Imperialism: The creation and maintenance of an unequal economic, cultural, and territorial relationship, usually between states and often in the form of an empire, based on domination and subordination.

Self: The process of identity formation through the construction of myths of a nation, a forced and stable category based on a knowable, "transcendental" and "autonomous" sense of self.

Other: In postcolonial theory, it refers to the colonized others who are marginalized by the imperial discourse, identified by their difference from the centre and become the focus of anticipated mastery by the imperial 'ego.'

Background:

Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* has descriptions of what happens when Europeans attempt to force their cultural values on other countries. Kipling's Kim is a character that takes on many characteristics of both sides, the British and the Indian. Here, we understand the downside of colonialism but also the fact that Kipling views this colonialism as "right." Kipling uses his characters to show how native mentality and British supremacy often came into confrontation. The idea of one country taking possession over another is shown here through a simple children's game.

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is a much harsher condemnation of the terror and oppression that result from domination, particularly European domination of Africa. Conrad views colonialism as a moral vice and a cultural bully of the Europeans. Kurtz depicts the horrors and evils that colonialism inflicts on the colonized. Marlow shows us that anyone can be drawn into the web of colonialism. Conrad's view of colonialism is that of taking away from a society, as exploitation and not as a civilizing mission. The rulers dislike the native people and have no problem exploiting or even killing them.

E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* provides not only a critique of the British Empire, but shows how it sets off a network of social, political, and cultural forces that reverberates across the British Empire. Here, the protagonist's trial, and its run-up and aftermath, bring out all the racial tensions and prejudices between indigenous Indians and the British colonists who ruled India. The British community condemns Dr. Aziz, assuming he's a criminal because of his race. Fielding's logical Western mind cannot comprehend the mystery of India, but he is highly tolerant and respectful toward Indians. He befriends Dr. Aziz, but cultural and racial differences, and personal misunderstandings, separate them.

None of the above authors present a relationship between the colonizers and the colonized in simplistic terms of the colonial Self and the colonized Other. What sets Orwell apart from the above mentioned authors is that in more than one work Orwell himself figures as a key character or participant in the action. Orwell may be a part of the Imperial structure but the Imperialist Self is not the same as Orwell's Self. His stance is not political or social but humanistic and his yardstick of judgment is strictly ethical. For Orwell, people belonging to the ruling class are

as much oppressed by the imperialist situation as the colonized/natives are. They are also victims of the imperialist projects. They need our sympathy as much as people living in colonial oppression.

Orwell's works like *Burmese Days*, "Shooting an Elephant" and "Marrakech" act as a critique of Imperialism. In this thesis I am interested in exploring the representation of the Self and the Other as presented by Orwell and at the same time comparing and contrasting it with his contemporaries .I would also look upon the use of systems of knowledge to exercise authority in the colonial world as well as in the totalitarian rule, particularly the use of language.

Orwell in his essay "Marrakech", talks about the Self and the Other and points the difference between them and how all the colonial empires are built upon that difference. He sympathizes with the natives and calls them 'undifferentiated brown stuff' who are 'next door to invisible'.

In "Shooting an Elephant" also, Orwell presents the picture of an Imperial who is stuck between the hatred of the empire he serves and that of the natives. He makes his stance clear as against the Imperials or oppressors and in favour of the natives. He expresses 'the futility of the white man's dominion in the east' and how when the white man turns 'tyrant' he destroys his own freedom. He talks about the dilemma of the White man who has to live up to the Self- image in front of 'them'. Here Orwell, like Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*, presents the moral dilemmas of the imperialist. He realizes that imperialism works against both the imperialists and the natives. Orwell's story evokes pathos for the politically powerful imperialist who suffers from his own tyranny.

Similarly his novel *Burmese Days* presents a devastating picture of both indigenous corruption and British colonial rule. It describes Imperial bias in a society when 'after all natives were natives-interesting, no doubt, but finally only a 'subject' people, an inferior people with black faces.' It provides a detailed account of European racism within dual colonial society through the exclusivity of the European club. However, the protagonist, Flory appreciates the local culture, has native allegiances, and detests the racist machinations of his fellow Club members. Still, he doesn't always possess the moral courage, or the energy, to stand against them.

In *Animal Farm*, his allegory of the Soviet Revolution, Orwell examines the use of language and the subversion of the meaning of words by showing how the powerful manipulate words for their own benefit. As a journalist, Orwell knew the power of words to serve whichever side the writer backed. In the novel, Snowball is a quick talker who can always explain his way out of any situation. The pigs gradually twist and distort language to justify their behavior and to keep the other animals in the dark. By the end of the novel, after Squealer's repeated reconfigurations of the Seven Commandments in order to decriminalize the pigs' treacheries, the main principle of the farm can be openly stated as "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

Orwell's *1984* demonstrates the terrifying degree of power and control a totalitarian regime can acquire and maintain .Orwell presents this dichotomy to demonstrate how totalitarian societies promote the wealth of the ruling regime while decreasing the quality of life for all other members of society. Such governments often tout their hopes for establishing an equal society when in reality the separation between their living conditions and those of the citizens is vast.Edward Said in *Orientalism* and his publications The *Question of Palestine* and *Covering Islam*, demonstrated that Foucault's idea that power operates through systems of knowledge applied to the ways in which authority was exercised in the colonial world. In *1984*, Newspeak plays an extremely important role in Oceanian society and in the Party's control over its population. Here also language is used as a mechanism of mind control. Languages develop over centuries, and are deeply intertwined with culture and history. Redefining and forcing a language on a population, as was often done in the postcolonial era, denies that society its individuality.

Many scholars have, however, discovered other meanings which I will explore. Adibur Rahman in his critical work *George Orwell: A Humanistic Perspective*, places Orwell in the category of an important post-war novelist with wide humanitarian awareness. His novels *Animal Farm* and *1984* were taken to be a revolt against all that he had cherished in his youth. He was wholly on the side of the oppressed always against the oppressors. He never hesitates in condemning such powers which made the natives inferior. Citing his work, I will also explore his great liking for the natives and their country, its nature and its landscapes and

how he represents the entire British Class for whom the colonized nation has been a leap into the unknown-adventure, romance, self-realization, and the chance to grow up.

I will also explore Orwell's anti totalitarian views and his use of language for representation building upon Alok Rai's *Orwell and the Politics of Despair*, where he talks about daringly innovative concepts of 'Newspeak' and 'Doublethink' in *1984.*I will also look at the use of language in *Animal Farm,* to rule and to control 'them' by 'us'.

Taking reference from Ashis Nandy's *The Intimate Enemy,* I will explore how Imperialism colonizes minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all .Flory in Orwell's *Burmese Days* is similar to the White Sahib of Ashis Nandy who is not the conspiratorial dedicated oppressor that he is made out to be but a self destructive co-victim, caught in the hinges of history he swears by.

The paper "Non-literal language in Political Discourse" by Elena Mihas discusses the notion of political discourse and analysis of euphemisms which abound in the political language. It coins the term doublespeak as an amalgam of two Orwellian expressions, doublethink and newspeak, both of which appeared in Orwell's dystopian novel *1984.* Basic to doublespeak is incongruity: the incongruity between what is said, or left unsaid, and what really is; between the essential function of language (communication) and what doublespeak does – "misleads, distorts, deceives, inflates, obfuscates". It also discusses the use of metaphors in political discourse. I also intend to discuss the use of language to exercise control in colonial and totalitarian rules in Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984* taking into account Orwell's essay "Politics and the English Language".

The primary objective of my study will be to attempt an in-depth analysis of Orwell's own stance in relation to both the ruling class in the colonies and the native subjects. The study will then examine how Orwell's stance problematises the notion of representation of the Self and the Other leading to a deconstruction of the traditional ideas of the superior colonial Self and the colonized Other. The study will finally aim at establishing that though Orwell wrote his works much

before the postcolonial literary theory came into existence his writing provides a much more sophisticated understanding of the psyche of the colonial Self and the colonized Other than was initially conceived of by postcolonial theorists. This study of Orwell's works can thus be seen as contributing a new dimension to the postcolonial division between the Self and the Other.

Research Methods:

My research methods will consist of analyzing and interpreting the primary sources. I will also use the biographical and historical materials to establish the social and political climate which influenced the writer. I will support my findings with a significant number of critical writings on the works, which deal with the representation of the Self and the Other.

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Tentative Chapters:

1. Theory of the Self and the Other

2. Analysis of Marrakech: Psyche of the Colonizers /colonized.

3. Analysis of Shooting An Elephant

4. Analysis of Burmese Days

5. Analysis of Animal Farm

6. Analysis of 1984

7. Conclusion